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The situation and prospects of the population in the Black River settlement, Louisiana

Thomas Lynn Smith

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THE SITUATION AND PROSPECTS OF THE POPULATION IN THE BLACK RIVER SETTLEMENT, LOUISIANA

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THE SITUATION AND PROSPECTS OF THE POPULATION IN THE BLACK RIVER SETTLEMENT, LOUISIANA

T. LYNN SMITH AND S. EARL GRIGSBY

INTRODUCTION

This study analyzes the situation and prospects of the population in a selected rural area of distress in the state of Louisiana. The material presented herein should be of value to those agencies and individuals that are sponsoring programs designed to bring about a more equitable adjustment between the population and the land. The area studied is the Black River settlement which lies partly in Ward 9 and partly in Ward 10 of Concordia Parish, Louisiana. The land area of these two wards comprises slightly more than one-third of the entire land area of the parish. However, only a small portion of the land in these wards is cultivated; a large part consists of swamps. In 1929 only 15.2 per cent of the 169,682 acres which compose these two wards was in farms and only slightly more than 6 per cent was in cropland¹.

The information herein presented was obtained by means of a house-to-house canvass, in which 137 family heads, representing 97 white families and 40 Negro families, were interviewed. The family schedules were carefully edited, and whenever answers were lacking or questionable, a second visit was made to the family. A period of four months was spent in collecting the information secured in this survey.² Repeated visits have been made to the area for the purpose of checking and re-checking conclusions.

The "Stranded Population" studies in Louisiana, of which this was one, were conceived and executed under the Co-operative Plan of Research entered into by the Division of Social Research, Rural Research Unit of the Works Progress Administration, Washington, D. C., the Louisiana State University Agricultural Experiment Station, and the Works Progress Administration of Louisiana. Each community was chosen as representing as nearly as possible a specific type of "troubled area."

The Black River survey was under the general supervision of T. Lynn Smith, State Supervisor of Rural Research, and under the direct supervision of Sam R. Carter, Assistant State Supervisor of Rural Research. The field schedules were taken by Mrs. Cecile Darby, a resident of Concordia Parish.

The last seven years have been characterized by large-scale activity programs designed to bring about a more equitable adjustment between the population and

¹See J. P. Montgomery, *Area of Minor Civil Divisions (Wards) in Louisiana*, Louisiana State University Agricultural Experiment Station, November, 1935 (mimeographed).

²The family schedules were taken between the months of March and June, 1936.

the land. Many of these programs have found their way into the statute books of the states and Nation. These various programs, if they are to have the slightest chance for success, must be based upon accurate information pertaining to the problems which are being considered. Furthermore, the Nation cannot afford to ignore the severe distress still to be found in many rural areas, or the deep-seated social and economic maladjustments which perpetually doom thousands of innocent persons to lives of poverty and wretchedness. It was with this purpose in mind that the following report, which furnishes the basic facts pertaining to what has been called a "stranded population" area in Louisiana, was prepared.

HISTORY OF THE BLACK RIVER SETTLEMENT

The Black River settlement of Concordia Parish has a history of more than ordinary significance. Along the banks of this stream have passed many great men whose expeditions, battles, and deeds are now written in the histories of the world, America, and Louisiana. De Soto, the famous Spanish explorer, after spending the winter of 1541-1542 in southern Arkansas, traveled down the banks of the Ouachita, the Black, and probably also the Red River, seeking his way to the Gulf of Mexico.³

Concordia, the mother parish of northeast Louisiana, was created in 1805 by the first Legislative Council of Orleans Territory. In 1807, and then again in 1843, "Concordia county" was divided and redivided, thus reducing its vast area to approximately 714 square miles, its present size.⁴ (See Figure 1.) The entire western side of Concordia Parish is bounded by the Black and Red rivers. The Ouachita River, with its headwaters in the Ozark Mountains, and the Tensas River, which heads along the Mississippi River in the southeastern corner of Arkansas, converge at a point about 60 miles above the mouth of the Red River. From this junction to the Red River both rivers lose their names.

. . . during a meandering course of about sixty miles they assume the name of Black River, an appellation probably derived from the color of soil through which it runs.⁵

EARLY SETTLERS ON BLACK RIVER

About one hundred years ago, in 1836, a large colony of farmers from the eastern seaboard settled on small tracts of land along the eastern banks of the Black River. The soils along the banks of this river, being very fertile, were most influential in inducing these early pioneers to settle in this section of the parish. However, the colonists were probably unaware of the frequent inunda-

³Somewhere along this route De Soto died of malaria and was buried in the Mississippi River, probably near the mouth of the Red River. See Alcée Fortier, *Louisiana*, Vol. I (1914), Century History Association, pp. 347-348; Robert D. Calhoun, "A History of Concordia Parish," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, 1932, 1-2; and W. D. Shawner, "Geology of Catahoula and Concordia Parishes," *Geological Bulletin No. 9*, Department of Conservation, Louisiana Geological Survey, New Orleans, 1936.

⁴Robert D. Calhoun, *op. cit.*

⁵H. Bry, "Louisiana Ouachita Region," *De Bow's Review*, Vol. 12 (March, 1847) p. 229.

recognize the titles based on grants made prior to the Louisiana purchase.⁷ It was not until after the passage of the Act of Congress of June 17, 1844, which made provision for the adjustment of land claims in Louisiana and elsewhere, that the titles and grants made prior to the Louisiana Purchase (1803) were cleared. In the second place, the frequent and almost annual inundation of this entire area by the floods and backwaters of the Mississippi, Red, Black, Tensas, and Ouachita rivers limited, to a large extent, the improvements of the small homesteads. The dwelling houses were generally only temporary edifices, or if frame buildings, they were generally unfinished.⁸

While rice, sugar cane, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, rye, millet, tea, tobacco, and indigo were grown, cotton soon became the main crop. There was only enough corn raised for the consumption of the animals and the human operatives. In 1850 cotton yield per acre averaged about a bale of 400 pounds of ginned cotton.

In addition to agriculture, the early industries along the Black River were trapping, hunting, and timbering. Bear, deer, turkey, beaver, and squirrels were plentiful. Instead of using butter and lard, the early inhabitants of the section used bear's oil. The bayous, lakes, and rivers were teeming with fish, but the main exported articles were the pelts of the bear and beavers, and, of less importance, timber.

EARLY TOWNS, CHURCHES, SCHOOLS, AND DISEASES

The Black River settlement played an important part in the commercial as well as the religious and educational life of the parish during the early fifties. Writing in 1850, Kilpatrick said:

We really have no towns in the parish. At Vidalia is the court house, and offices of the parish functions, with lawyers and doctors' shops, and a boarding house, but not one single store of any kind, or even a warehouse. I know of but one store in the parish, and that is kept down on Black River, below Horse Shoe Lake, by Captain S. C. Scott, and sells, perhaps not more than \$10,000 worth in a year.⁹

In common with many other frontier areas, there was no college or library in the parish.¹⁰ As for religion, it was only talked of as one of the bygones. Such

⁷In 1796 Governor Carondelet, Spanish Governor of Louisiana, granted to Louis Bringier 40,000 arpents of land at the junction of the Rio Negro (Black River) and Bayou Tensas. "Roughly, the Bringier grant comprised all of the land from the intersection of the east line of Moro Plantation with the Tensas River; thence down the Tensas River to the Black; thence down the Black River to a quarter of a mile below the residence of Joseph Willson, at Lismore, thence due east (with exception of Section 16), to west side of Horse Shoe Lake; thence around the north and down the east bank of the lake, to within a quarter mile of Cross Cocodrie Bayou, thence due east, a short distance, to Range Line between Ranges Seven and Eight; thence north with Range Line to beginning." (Robert D. Calhoun, *op. cit.*, p. 52.) (See Figure 3 for the location of the grant.) This grant only affected the upper portion of the Black River settlement; however, because of the failure of the United States to recognize this grant, there was a degree of uncertainty of ownership on the small tracts in close proximity to it which probably limited the improvement on them. There were no Spanish Grants south of this one.

⁸A. R. Kilpatrick, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁰The largest library in the entire parish, according to A. R. Kilpatrick, a resident of Black River, was his own, which consisted of some 500 volumes; however, much of it was exclusively medical. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

services as were held were conducted by itinerant preachers.¹¹ For more than 12 months (to the close of 1850), no more than one sermon was preached in the whole parish. Very few people made any pretensions of religion. In 1850 there was but one church edifice in the parish, a Methodist Episcopal church located in the Black River settlement.¹²

In 1850 there were only three schools in the parish, and two of these were on Black River. The other was located on the Mississippi River below Vidalia.¹³

Mortality was great among children in that early day. Most of the adult male deaths were attributed to the immediate or remote effects of drinking mean spirituous liquors; for the women, however, "more were killed by disease connected with, or springing from sexual organization, parturition and its sequelae."¹⁴ Intestinal worms killed hundreds of children annually, while dentition and its concomitants claimed other hundreds.¹⁵

THE CIVIL WAR

The Black River settlement, composed mostly of small homesteads, furnished its share of Confederate soldiers; it was also the locality of several skirmishes. On April 19, 1861, the Military Committee for Concordia Parish appropriated \$10,000 "for the purpose of arming and equipping such military corps as may be raised in the parish." Out of this there was paid \$750 to the Black River Mounted Rifleman.¹⁶ Company "C" of the 25th Louisiana Infantry was organized at Monterey, a large cotton plantation on Black River, in March, 1862, with Samuel C. Scott as captain.¹⁷

On July 12, 1863, a Federal Naval Fleet composed of the U. S. S. Forest Rose, Manitou, Petrel, Curlew, Conestoga, and Rattler, reached Trinity. The following is an extract from the log of the U. S. S. Rattler:

July 16, 1863.—Black River, La. At 5 A. M. hove up anchor and stood down Black River. At 9:15 A. M. made fast to bank at plantation of Major Beard. Sent an armed party ashore and posted pickets around the house. Ordered him to remove all furniture, etc., from his dwelling, as we had directions from Lieutenant Com. Selfridge to burn his house and gin, he hav-

¹¹See the *Minutes of the Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* for the years 1829 and following, for accounts of early Protestant religious activity in Louisiana.

¹²Kilpatrick, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

¹³The school below Vidalia on the Mississippi River had but one student, but being a public school, the school teacher was entitled to full salary of \$500.00 per annum . . . *Ibid.*, p. 61.

Robert Dabney Calhoun, author of "A History of Concordia Parish," in commenting on the foregoing section said, "Dr. Kilpatrick seems to belittle the rest of the parish in favor of the Black River section. There may have been no stores or schools in Vidalia at the time he wrote, but there were stores and schools before and after."

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 61. Dr. A. R. Kilpatrick kept a record of the number of deaths and the average population between 1840 and 1850. According to his records there were:

| | |
|---|-------|
| Average white population for ten years (1840-1850)..... | 1,793 |
| Who'e number of deaths for the ten years (1840-1850)..... | 513 |

This would give a death rate for the entire parish of approximately 35 per 1,000.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁶R. D. Calhoun, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

¹⁷Samuel C. Scott was captain under General Zachary Taylor at the storming and capture of Monterey. On his return from Mexico, in commemoration of that event, he gave his landing and plantation on Black River the name of Monterey. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

ing given information to the enemy of our approach up the river. At 3 p. m. set fire to the ginhouse on Beard Plantation. At 3 p. m. the Conestoga Forest Rose and Curlew arrived. Lieutenant Com. Selfridge gave orders not to burn his house and not to carry away his negroes. At 4:15 p. m. cast off from shore and stood down the river.¹⁸

Following the war labor was very scarce in Concordia Parish, as well as in the entire South. In 1868 in Concordia Parish only "one acre in ten that was formerly cultivated was under the plow."¹⁹ Many of the youths from the small family farms along the banks of the Black and Tensas rivers had fought and died in the Civil War. With the young men gone, the small family farms were left with only the old men, old women, young women, and children to carry on. Many of these small family farms were left idle while others were only partly cultivated. The large plantations suffered also, but they were not left entirely without labor, since on most of them there were still many of the former slaves who desired to remain with their masters. After the Civil War the Black River section gradually relinquished its prominent place to the large cotton plantations in the eastern portion of the parish.

FLOODS AND INUNDATION

More than any other single danger, the threat of flood always hangs over the heads of Black River people. Lower Concordia Parish, being almost surrounded by flooding rivers, has always been subject to annual inundation. The waters of 10 or more major streams and 20 or more smaller rivers, creeks, and bayous compose the tributaries of the three rivers which comprise the western, the southern, and the northern boundaries of Concordia Parish.²⁰ (See Figure 2.) The Red River, with its headwaters in the panhandle of Texas, after passing through Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana meets the Black River at a point 45 miles above its mouth to form the southern boundary line of Concordia Parish.

The early writings and records show that very few years elapsed without seeing the Black River section inundated.²¹ Not only is the Black River settlement subject to the ravages of the Father of Waters, but it is within the bottleneck through which the waters from four states must pass on their way to the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. The building of levees has placed the Mississippi, the Red, and the Atchafalaya rivers in a strait jacket, thus leaving the waters of the Ouachita, the Tensas, and the Black rivers only two outlets: through the partly closed mouth of the Red River into the Mississippi River, and through the Atchafalaya River into the Gulf of Mexico. During the flood stage the Mississippi River flows through the Red River into the Atchafalaya River, leaving only one outlet for the Red River, Ouachita, Black, Tensas rivers, and

¹⁸Official record Union and Confederate Navies in War of Rebellion, Series I, Vol. 25, pp. 270-271.—Extract from *A History of Concordia Parish* by Robert Dabney Calhoun, p. 122.

¹⁹See "Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction, 1866," 1st Session, 39th Congress, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., pp. 140-145.

²⁰The three rivers which form the western, the southern, and the northern boundaries are: the Black, the Red, and the Tensas rivers.

²¹See H. Bry, "Louisiana Ouachita Region," *op. cit.*, and Dr. A. R. Kilpatrick, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-60.

their tributaries. Thus Concordia Parish, and especially the Black River section, has been and continues to be a basin for the floods and backwaters of the Red, Ouachita, Tensas, and Mississippi rivers. The building of higher and more confining levees, and the straightening out of the bends in the Mississippi to protect other areas have resulted in "bigger and better" and more frequent floods in this section.²²

Apparently the extensive flood-control operations of the Federal government have purposely left this area unprotected by levees, so that it may serve as a reservoir for the floods and backwaters of the Mississippi, the Red, the Black, the Ouachita, and the Tensas rivers. Only because the change was so gradual has it been possible for the people to make any adjustment to the trying circumstances. The greater frequency and destructiveness of floods has been accompanied by a progressive deterioration of the social and economic resources

²²For a record of the most important floods since 1543, see W. D. Shawner, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-32.

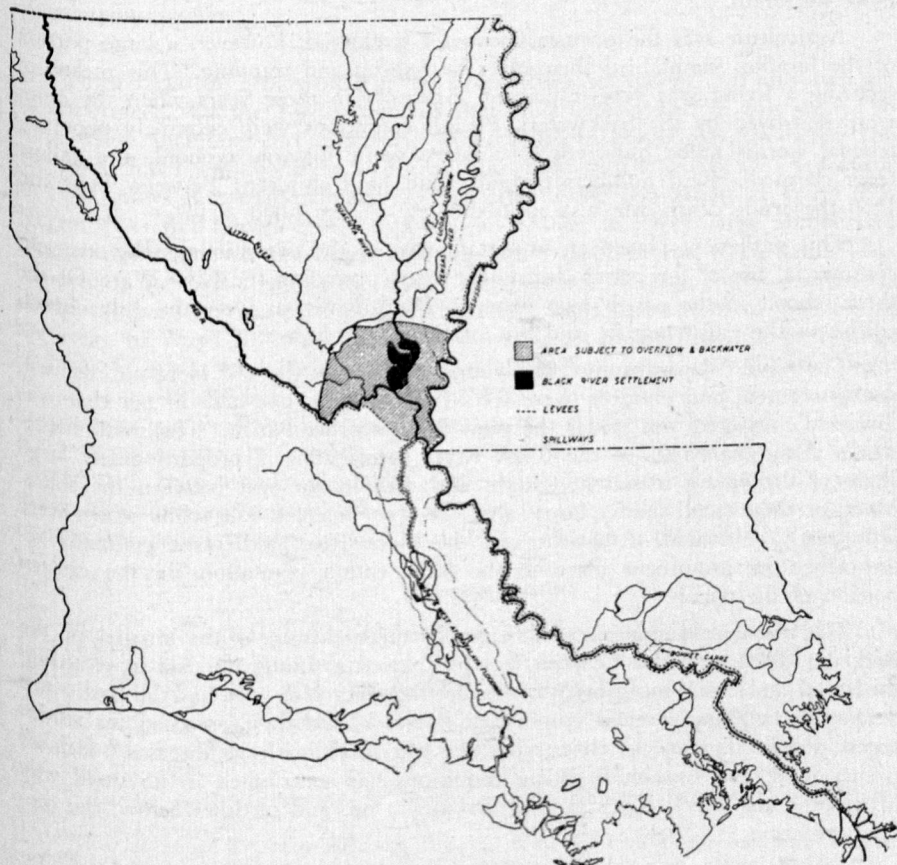


FIG. 2.—Map of Louisiana showing the Black River settlement in relation to the streams which add to the flood and backwater problems of the area.

of the population in the area, until it has resulted in perpetual poverty and wretchedness for many of the inhabitants.

SUMMARY

The Black River settlement is approximately one hundred years old. The original settlers, a group of sturdy pioneers from the Atlantic seaboard states, settled on small tracts of land along the east bank of the Black River. They migrated into this district between 1836 and 1837; however, they were soon followed by a group who came from Mississippi and the neighboring parishes. The early settlers were hesitant in building other than temporary homes, because in the upper end of the community the Federal Government refused to recognize Spanish grants made prior to the purchase of Louisiana, which in turn made ownership in the region very uncertain; and in addition, the inhabitants of the settlement were driven from their homes almost yearly by the backwaters and flood waters of the rivers that surround the parish, making occupancy even more uncertain.

Agriculture was the primary means of livelihood; however, a large portion of the families maintained themselves by fishing and trapping. This means of securing a living was very important, especially in those years when the crops were destroyed by the backwaters. Health conditions were extremely poor; intestinal worms killed hundreds of children while malaria, typhoid, and yellow fever claimed untold numbers of both adults and children. Between 1840 and 1850 the crude death rate was approximately 35 per 1,000.

This settlement played an important part in the educational, religious, and commercial life of the parish during the years preceding the Civil War. Of the three schools in the parish, two were on Black River, as were the only church edifice in the entire parish, and one of the largest stores.

The Civil War consumed the young men; only the old men, old women, young women, and children were left. In 1866 only one acre in ten that was formerly cultivated was under the plow in Concordia Parish. The small homesteads along the banks of the Black River furnished a disproportionately large share of the young men who fought and died in the war between the states. Many of these small family farms after the war were left idle while others were only partly cultivated. After the war the Black River settlement gradually relinquished its prominent place to the large cotton plantations in the eastern portion of the parish.

The frequent inundation of this area by the backwater of the Mississippi, the Red, the Black, and the Tensas rivers has played a significant part in retarding the social and economic growth of the settlement. Not only has the backwater destroyed their homes, their crops, their livestock, and their prospects for attaining a decent standard of living, but the aftermath with its diseases,²³ lack of proper food, and unsanitary living conditions has contributed in no small way in keeping the Black River families habitually on, and oftentimes below, the economic margin.

²³Tornadoes frequently follow high water; in the year 1937, 500 acres of cotton were destroyed, and 12 houses were ruined, most of them being replaced by the Red Cross.

COMPOSITION OF THE POPULATION

The make-up and characteristics of the population of a settlement determine in a large measure the utilization of its resources, the strength of its institutions, and the whole tone of its social life. As a necessary background for activity programs, the composition of the population of a community cannot be too strongly emphasized.

NUMBER AND DENSITY

Approximately 490 families resided in Wards 9 and 10 in 1930. The white families numbered 246, Negro families 244. In these households lived 2,119 persons.^{23a} Since there are approximately 265 square miles of land area in the two wards, the density of population averaged eight persons per square mile. This relatively sparse density, however, does not present a true picture. Much of the land area is uninhabitable, and the larger portion of the people live along or very near the banks of the Black River. (See Figure 3.) If it were possible to calculate the population density of the inhabited areas, the density would be considerably greater.

RACIAL COMPOSITION

Three races are represented in the Black River settlement, but only two are of importance. Of the 137 households that were interviewed in this study, 96 were white, including 434 members; 40 were Negro households, including 166 members; and 1 was an American Indian household with 1 member.²⁴ The Census of 1930 shows that approximately 75 per cent of the population of Ward 9 is Negro. It is well-known that the plantation system, in which large numbers of Negroes are employed as manual laborers—share croppers and wage hands—has pre-empted the best lands in the state. The presence of large cotton plantations in the northern portion of this ward makes for high proportions of Negroes in the area. In Ward 10, which has been more subject to overflow, the percentage of Negroes in the total population is considerably less, being only slightly above 25 per cent. In the lower reaches of the Black River settlement the plantation system was never established and there are practically no Negroes. The few Negro families that are found in the upper end of the settlement, the part which borders the large cotton plantation area, exhibit certain characteristics which differ in many respects from their kinsmen who live on the large cotton plantations in the parish. These differences will be indicated in the following section.²⁵

ANCESTRY

The families now residing in the Black River settlement may be divided into two classes: (1) the descendants of the early settlers; and (2) recent arrivals, consisting in a large measure of the families who took refuge in this section during the recent depression. As shown previously, the first settlers came from the Atlantic Seaboard. A very large percentage of the present population stems

^{23a}Bureau of the Census, U. S. Department of Commerce, *Fifteenth Census of the United States*, 1930, Vol. III, Part I, p. 1005.

²⁴This household has been included with the white families in the following analysis.

²⁵For a detailed discussion of the relation between the plantation system, Negroes, and good land, see Arthur Raper, *Preface to Peasantry*, pp. 99-157; cf. T. Lynn Smith, "The Population of Louisiana: Its Composition and Changes," Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station, *Bulletin No.* 293, Baton Rouge, November, 1937, pp. 6-9.

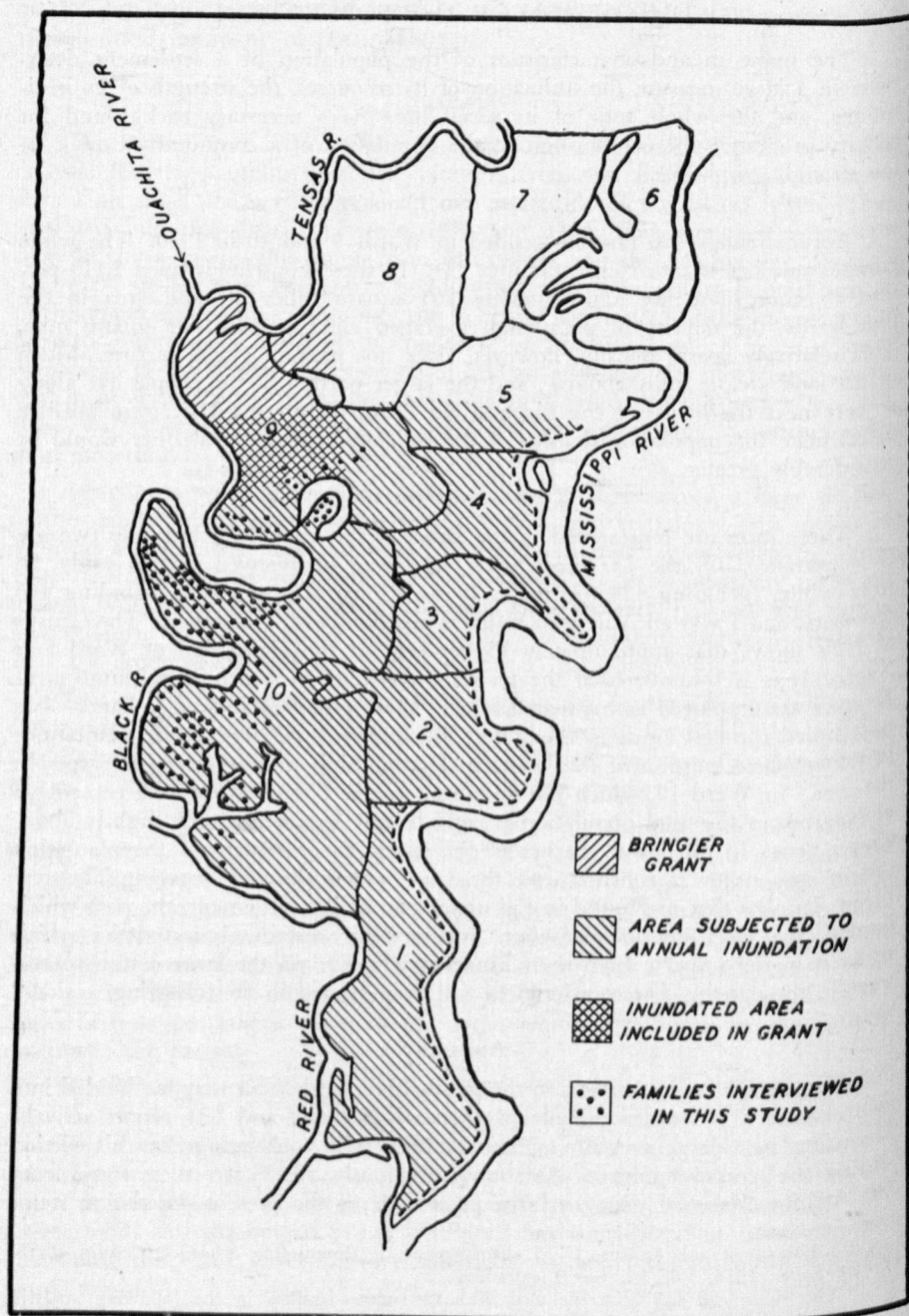


FIG. 3.—Map of Concordia Parish showing the Black River settlement and the location of the households included in this study.

TABLE 1. SOME FAMILY NAMES APPEARING ON ASSESSMENT ROLLS, 1806, AMONG EARLY SETTLERS ON BLACK RIVER BETWEEN 1838-1857, AND IN COMPANY "C" OF 25th INFANTRY, 1862, WITH NUMBER OF FAMILIES OF SAME NAMES THAT WERE INTERVIEWED IN THIS SURVEY (ONLY WHITE FAMILIES INCLUDED)

| FAMILY NAMES TAKEN FROM SURVEY | NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS OR FAMILIES OF SAME NAME APPEARING | | |
|--------------------------------|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| | On Assessment Roll—1806 Black River Settlement | Among Early Settlers on Black River, 1838-1857 | In Company "C" La. Infantry, 1862 |
| Adams | 1 | 1 | --- |
| Brown | 1 | 1 | --- |
| Bryan | 3 | 2 | --- |
| Dale | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Delhoste | 2 | 1 | --- |
| Green | 1 | 1 | --- |
| Jones | 2 | 1 | --- |
| King | 1 | --- | --- |
| Lee | 1 | 2 | --- |
| Morace | 8 | 1 | 1 |
| Rice | 1 | --- | 1 |
| Robinson | 1 | --- | --- |
| Smith | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Steele | 2 | --- | 1 |
| Thompson | 1 | 2 | --- |
| Tiffey | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| White | 3 | 2 | --- |
| Wiley | 2 | 1 | --- |
| Williams | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 38 | 17 | 9 |
| No record | 59 | | |
| TOTAL | 97 | | |

from these early settlers. Thirty-eight per cent of the white family names on the survey schedules also appear on the early assessment rolls and other old records (Table 1). Other facts indicating that many of the present inhabitants are descendants of the original settlers are shown in Table 2. For example, slightly more than 12 per cent of the family heads had no remembrance of living elsewhere, and more than half of the family heads asserted that their ancestors moved into this settlement prior to 1900.

The neighboring parishes of Catahoula, Rapides, and Avoyelles also furnished a large share of the ancestors of the present inhabitants. A close examination of the schedules shows that many of the ancestors of the white families came from the poor hilly parishes of this state, while many of the Negro ancestors, seemingly, came from the plantation areas of Louisiana. It may be that this settlement is something of a refuge, especially for the unsuccessful hill farmer and the aged plantation Negro cropper and "tenant."

There has been a constant infiltration of new blood into the district since 1900. Approximately 11 per cent (Table 2) of the families moved into the

TABLE 2. DATE OF ENTRANCE OF IMMEDIATE FAMILY OR ANCESTORS INTO THE BLACK RIVER SETTLEMENT, BY RACE

| DATE | TOTAL | | WHITE | | NEGRO | |
|------------------------------------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|
| | Number | Per Cent | Number | Per Cent | Number | Per Cent |
| 1846-1855 | 1 | 0.7 | 1 | 1 | --- | --- |
| 1856-1865 | 8 | 5.8 | 8 | 8 | --- | --- |
| 1866-1875 | 14 | 10.2 | 11 | 11 | 3 | 8 |
| 1876-1885 | 15 | 11.0 | 11 | 11 | 4 | 10 |
| 1886-1895 | 14 | 10.2 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 15 |
| 1896-1905 | 13 | 9.5 | 11 | 11 | 2 | 5 |
| 1906-1915 | 15 | 11.0 | 13 | 14 | 2 | 5 |
| 1916-1925 | 7 | 5.1 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 5 |
| 1926-1935 | 15 | 11.0 | 13 | 14 | 2 | 5 |
| No remembrance of living elsewhere | 17 | 12.4 | 10 | 10 | 7 | 17 |
| Not available | 18 | 13.1 | 6 | 6 | 12 | 30 |
| TOTAL | 137 | 100.0 | 97 | 100 | 40 | 100 |

settlement in the last 10 years. Like other remote areas, Black River served as a resting place for the backwash of population during the recent depression. Approximately 7 per cent of the families now living in the settlement entered during the depression years of 1930-1934.

The foregoing analysis seems to indicate three important characteristics of the ancestral background of these people. First, while a large portion of the early settlers were migrants from the Atlantic Seaboard, they were soon followed by a group who came from the poor lands in Catahoula, Rapides, and Avoyelles parishes. Second, probably the early Negro settlers were migrants from the large plantation areas. The Negroes began to enter this community immediately after the Civil War. Third, in the last 35 years or so there has been a constant migration into this section, the larger proportion of the whites coming from the poorer lands of Catahoula, Rapides, and Avoyelles, and the Negroes from the plantation areas of Concordia and Catahoula parishes and the state of Mississippi.

The major elements which have entered into the composition of the population in the Black River settlement, listed in the order of their importance, are French, Irish, Scotch, Dutch, German, English, and American Indian (Table 3). Approximately one-third of the male and female heads or wives claimed French descent. Probably a large number of those claiming French descent are strains from the French Huguenots who settled along the Atlantic Seaboard and whose descendants contributed heavily to the migration into the South and the Southwest.

BIRTHPLACE

The family background of the present population is, in many respects, similar to that of the ancestral inhabitants. More than half of the present inhabitants

TABLE 3. THE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY STOCKS FROM WHICH THE MALE HEADS AND FEMALE HEADS OR WIVES CLAIMED DESCENT

| DESCENT | MALE HEADS | | | | FEMALE HEADS | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------|----------|-------------------|----------|---------------|----------|-----------------|----------|
| | PRIMARY STOCK* | | SECONDARY STOCK** | | PRIMARY STOCK | | SECONDARY STOCK | |
| | Number | Per Cent | Number | Per Cent | Number | Per Cent | Number | Per Cent |
| Negro | 36 | 26.3 | ---- | ---- | 37 | 27.0 | ---- | ---- |
| French | 49 | 35.8 | 2 | 1.5 | 43 | 31.4 | 2 | 1.5 |
| German | 3 | 2.2 | 2 | 1.5 | 1 | 0.7 | 1 | 0.7 |
| English | 2 | 1.5 | 6 | 4.4 | 2 | 1.5 | 5 | 3.6 |
| Irish | 18 | 13.1 | 37 | 27.0 | 24 | 17.5 | 27 | 19.7 |
| Scotch | 10 | 7.3 | 4 | 2.9 | 9 | 6.6 | 7 | 5.1 |
| Dutch | 3 | 2.2 | 2 | 1.5 | 2 | 1.5 | 1 | 0.7 |
| American Indian | 1 | 0.7 | 1 | 0.7 | ---- | ---- | 2 | 1.5 |
| Other | 5 | 3.6 | ---- | ---- | 2 | 1.5 | ---- | ---- |
| No male or female head | 9 | 6.6 | 9 | 6.5 | 13 | 9.4 | 13 | 9.5 |
| Not available | 1 | 0.7 | 74 | 54.0 | 4 | 2.9 | 79 | 57.7 |
| TOTAL | 137 | 100.0 | 137 | 100.0 | 137 | 100.0 | 137 | 100.0 |

*Mentioned first.

**Mentioned second.

TABLE 4. BIRTHPLACE OF MALE HEADS AND FEMALE HEADS OR WIVES, BY RACE

| PLACE OF BIRTH | TOTAL | | MALE HEADS | | | | FEMALE HEADS OR WIVES | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------|----------|------------|----------|--------|----------|-----------------------|----------|--------|----------|
| | | | WHITE | | NEGRO | | WHITE | | NEGRO | |
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| LOUISIANA (parishes) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Avoyelles | 6 | 2.2 | 2 | 2 | --- | --- | 3 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Bienville | 1 | 0.4 | --- | --- | --- | --- | 1 | 1 | --- | --- |
| Catahoula | 38 | 13.8 | 12 | 13 | 5 | 13 | 12 | 12 | 9 | 23 |
| Concordia | 156 | 56.9 | 58 | 60 | 25 | 63 | 50 | 52 | 23 | 58 |
| East Feliciana | 1 | 0.4 | 1 | 1 | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Franklin | 2 | 0.8 | 1 | 1 | --- | --- | 1 | 1 | --- | --- |
| Grant | 1 | 0.4 | 1 | 1 | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Lafourche | 1 | 0.4 | 1 | 1 | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| LaSalle | 4 | 1.3 | 1 | 1 | --- | --- | 3 | 3 | --- | --- |
| Orleans | 1 | 0.4 | --- | --- | 1 | 2 | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Ouachita | 1 | 0.4 | --- | --- | 1 | 2 | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Rapides | 13 | 4.6 | 7 | 7 | --- | --- | 6 | 6 | --- | --- |
| Richland | 2 | 0.8 | --- | --- | --- | --- | 2 | 2 | --- | --- |
| St. Landry | 1 | 0.4 | --- | --- | 1 | 2 | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Tensas | 1 | 0.4 | --- | --- | --- | --- | 1 | 1 | --- | --- |
| West Feliciana | 1 | 0.4 | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | 1 | 2 |
| MISSISSIPPI | 10 | 3.6 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| TENNESSEE | 3 | 1.1 | 1 | 1 | --- | --- | 2 | 2 | --- | --- |
| TEXAS | 2 | 0.8 | --- | --- | --- | --- | 2 | 2 | --- | --- |
| EAST NORTH CENTRAL STATES..... | 2 | 0.8 | 2 | 2 | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| NOT AVAILABLE | 27 | 9.8 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 13 | 11 | 12 | 4 | 10 |
| TOTAL | 274 | 100.0 | 97 | 100 | 40 | 100 | 97 | 100 | 40 | 100 |

were born within the settlement, while the neighboring parishes of Catahoula, Avoyelles, LaSalle, and Rapides were the birthplaces for approximately one-fifth of the male and female heads or wives interviewed in this survey. (See Table 4.)

The Negro male heads and female heads or wives exhibit the same characteristics as those of their ancestors. Slightly more than three-fourths of the present Negro inhabitants were born in Catahoula and Concordia parishes. A close examination of the schedules reveals that many of the Negroes who have moved into this community since 1900 were born in the plantation areas of these two parishes.

AGE, SEX AND FERTILITY

The age and sex composition plays an important role in the vital processes of this, as in any settlement or community. The sex and age distribution of the total white and Negro populations as presented in Figure 4 and Table 5 discloses several important characteristics. In the first place, approximately one-third of the total white population is under the age of 10. Furthermore, over one-half of the total white population is under the age of 20 (Figure 4). This indicates strikingly the extent to which the white inhabitants are reproducing themselves. A computation shows that there are approximately 835.3 children

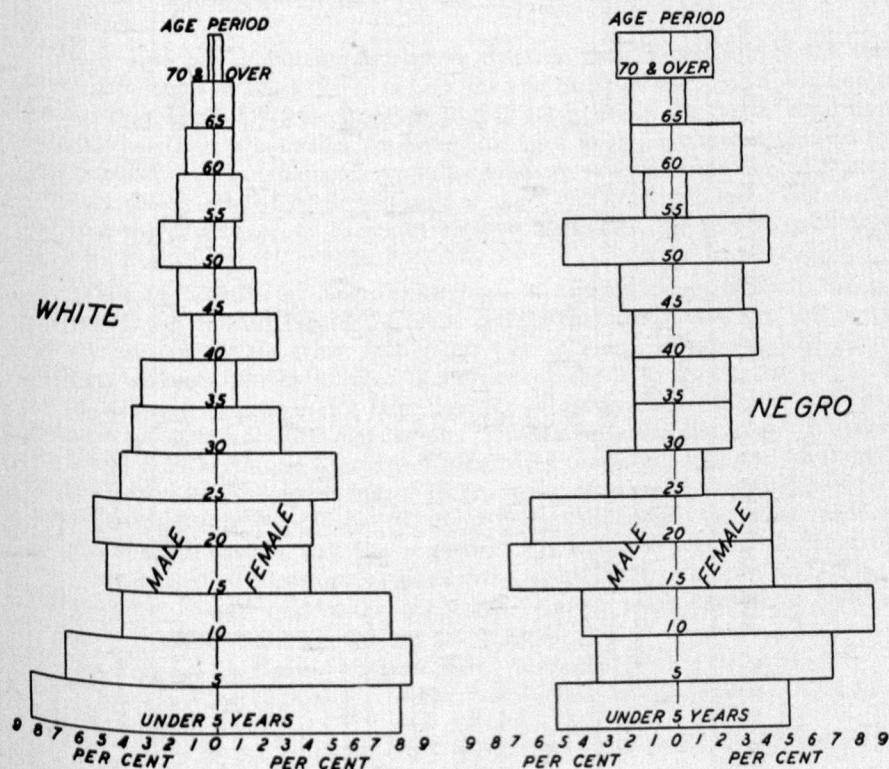


FIG. 4.—Age and sex distributions of the white and Negro populations of the Black River settlement.

TABLE 5. AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION OF THE BLACK RIVER SETTLEMENT, BY RACE

| AGE | WHITE | | | | | | NEGRO | | | | | |
|-----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|
| | TOTAL | | MALE | | FEMALE | | TOTAL | | MALE | | FEMALE | |
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| Under 5 | 71 | 16.3 | 36 | 8.3 | 35 | 8.0 | 17 | 10.2 | 9 | 5 | 8 | 5 |
| 5-9.9 | 66 | 15.2 | 29 | 6.7 | 37 | 8.5 | 17 | 10.2 | 6 | 4 | 11 | 7 |
| 10-14.9 | 51 | 11.7 | 18 | 4.1 | 33 | 7.6 | 21 | 12.6 | 7 | 4 | 14 | 9 |
| 15-19.9 | 39 | 8.9 | 21 | 4.8 | 18 | 4.1 | 19 | 11.4 | 12 | 7 | 7 | 4 |
| 20-24.9 | 43 | 9.8 | 23 | 5.4 | 19 | 4.2 | 16 | 9.7 | 9 | 5 | 7 | 4 |
| 25-29.9 | 42 | 9.6 | 18 | 4.1 | 23 | 5.3 | 7 | 4.2 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 30-34.9 | 28 | 6.4 | 16 | 3.7 | 12 | 2.8 | 7 | 4.2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| 35-39.9 | 18 | 4.1 | 14 | 3.2 | 4 | .9 | 7 | 4.2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| 40-44.9 | 16 | 3.7 | 7 | 1.6 | 9 | 2.7 | 9 | 5.5 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 3 |
| 45-49.9 | 15 | 3.4 | 7 | 1.6 | 8 | 1.8 | 9 | 5.5 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 3 |
| 50-54.9 | 14 | 3.2 | 10 | 2.4 | 4 | .9 | 15 | 9.1 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 4 |
| 55-59.9 | 13 | 3.0 | 7 | 1.6 | 6 | 1.2 | 3 | 1.8 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 60-64.9 | 10 | 2.3 | 6 | 1.2 | 4 | .9 | 8 | 4.8 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 3 |
| 65-69.9 | 8 | 1.8 | 4 | .9 | 4 | .9 | 4 | 2.4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 70 & over | 3 | .6 | 1 | .2 | 2 | .4 | 7 | 4.2 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| TOTAL | 435 | 100.0 | 217 | 49.8 | 218 | 50.2 | 166 | 100.0 | 81 | 48 | 85 | 51 |

under five years of age for every 1,000 women aged 15 to 44, inclusive, in this settlement. This represents an exceedingly high fertility ratio and indicates that the population is reproducing itself with great rapidity. According to recent estimates, the number of children under five years of age per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44, inclusive, that is required to maintain a stationary population is approximately 360.²⁶ This settlement, then, is producing over twice the number of children needed to maintain its population.²⁷

A further indication of the youthfulness of the present inhabitants is shown in Table 6. Approximately 43 per cent of the white male heads and 55 per cent of the white female heads are between the ages of 15 and 35. The middle-aged groups, 35 to 50, compose only about one-fifth of the white heads, while only 4.1 per cent of the white male heads and 3.1 per cent of the female heads or wives are over 65 years of age.

The age distribution of the white population (Table 5 and Figure 4) exhibits in an exaggerated degree many differences from the typical rural age distribution. The age distribution of a typical rural population is usually characterized by relatively few persons aged 15 to 44, inclusive, large numbers of aged 65 and over, and a scarcity of females. The only characteristic of the white population age distribution of this rural settlement which is in agreement with the typical rural age distribution is that both contain a very large proportion of children.

It is especially important to observe that less than 3 per cent of the total white population of Black River is over the age of 65 (Table 5). In addition to the fact that such a low percentage of aged is not found in the typical rural community, there also is a smaller percentage of aged in this settlement than in the total population of Louisiana, eleven other southern states and the United States.²⁸ Probably this is related to the ravages of the Civil War, and especially to the fact that the small crop of babies in 1860-1865 supplied the persons who were 65-70 in 1930.^{29a}

While the number of Negro inhabitants in this settlement is small, the age and sex distribution of Negroes exhibits certain characteristics which are nearly opposite to those of the white inhabitants (Table 5 and Figure 4). The Negro group is characterized by a large proportion of children, scarcity of people in the middle-aged groups, and a large number of aged; i. e., it exhibits the characteristics of a typical rural population. Noticeable is the fact that the Negro heads and their wives are a group of oldsters as compared with the white male heads (Table 6). The percentage of Negro males 65 years or over is almost four times that of the whites (Table 5). This helps substantiate the point made in the preceding discussion, that this settlement has served as a place of refuge for the incapacitated farmer and especially the aged Negro cropper and tenant. Meanwhile, it is quite evident that the young Negroes, particularly those between

²⁶See *Report of the National Resources Board*, Washington, D. C., 1934, p. 94.

²⁷There were 511 children for every 1,000 (rural) women, aged 15-44, in the United States in 1930. U. S. Census, 1930.

²⁸See T. Lynn Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-35, for discussion of the population of Louisiana, the South, and the United States.

^{29a}See T. Lynn Smith, "The Demographic Basis of Old Age Security in the South," *Social Forces*, Vol. 17 (March, 1939), pp. 356-361.

TABLE 6. AGE OF MALE AND FEMALE HEADS OR WIVES

| AGE | MALE HEADS | | | | | | FEMALE HEADS | | | |
|---------------|------------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------------|----------|--------|----------|
| | TOTAL | | WHITE | | NEGRO | | WHITE | | NEGRO | |
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| 15-19.9 | 6 | 2.2 | --- | --- | --- | --- | 5 | 5 | 1 | 3 |
| 20-24.9 | 35 | 12.1 | 9 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 18 | 19 | 4 | 10 |
| 25-29.9 | 38 | 13.8 | 15 | 16 | 4 | 10 | 17 | 18 | 2 | 5 |
| 30-34.9 | 35 | 12.7 | 17 | 18 | 3 | 8 | 13 | 14 | 2 | 5 |
| 35-39.9 | 21 | 7.7 | 12 | 12 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 10 |
| 40-44.9 | 26 | 9.5 | 7 | 7 | 3 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 17 |
| 45-49.9 | 22 | 8.0 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 10 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 10 |
| 50-54.9 | 28 | 10.2 | 11 | 12 | 8 | 20 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 17 |
| 55-59.9 | 12 | 4.4 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 5 | --- | --- |
| 60-64.9 | 16 | 5.8 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 10 |
| 65 and over | 16 | 5.8 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 15 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 8 |
| Not available | 21 | 7.7 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 10 | 11 | 11 | 2 | 5 |
| TOTAL | 274 | 100.0 | 97 | 100 | 40 | 100 | 97 | 100 | 40 | 100 |

the ages of 25 and 45, have left this section. Probably the neighboring large cotton plantations have received the greater share of them.

MARITAL STATUS

The percentage of married persons in this settlement (83.9 per cent of the total population) is exceedingly large, being above the percentage in the total population of Louisiana (61.0), 11 other southern states (61.8), and the United States (60.0).²⁹ (See Table 7.) The percentage of married Negroes is approxi-

TABLE 7. MARITAL STATUS OF HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS, BY RACE

| STATUS | TOTAL | | WHITE | | NEGRO | |
|-----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| Married | 115 | 83.9 | 82 | 85 | 33 | 83 |
| Widowed | 14 | 10.2 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 15 |
| Divorced | 1 | 0.7 | 1 | 1 | --- | --- |
| Single | 5 | 3.6 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| Separated | 2 | 1.5 | 2 | 2 | --- | --- |
| TOTAL | 137 | 100.0 | 97 | 100 | 40 | 100 |

mately the same as that found among the whites in this community, being 83 for the former and 85 for the latter. It should be remembered that the Negro heads are a group of oldsters, while the white heads are very young. The relatively high percentage of widowed Negroes (15 per cent) is partly accounted for by this age factor. The percentage of widowed among the whites is approximately one-half that found among the Negroes. The conspicuous absence of divorced and separated Negroes is significant. In most Negro communities there is usually a relatively high percentage of divorces and especially of separations. Divorces are not numerous among the rural Negro population primarily because of the financial aspects. Separation, the "poor man's divorce," is resorted to instead.³⁰

OCCUPATIONS

The Black River settlement is primarily an agricultural section. Approximately 9 out of every 10 of the male heads are farm owners, tenants, croppers, or farm laborers (Table 8). Formerly, many of the inhabitants were able to secure a livelihood by fishing, trapping, and by part-time employment offered by the lumber industries. The activities of the lumber companies, however, have

²⁹See T. Lynn Smith, *The Population of Louisiana*, for discussion of marital conditions for Louisiana, 11 other southern states and the United States.

³⁰In a recent study of Negro farm laborers in Concordia Parish it was found that approximately 13 per cent were separated. Many of the Negro laborers on these large cotton plantations are the sons and daughters of these aged Negroes in this community. S. Earl Grigsby, "Social and Economic Aspects of Negro Farm Labor on Large Cotton Plantations in Concordia Parish," M. A. thesis, Louisiana State University, 1937.

TABLE 8. OCCUPATIONS OF HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS, BY RACE

| OCCUPATION | TOTAL | | WHITE | | NEGRO | |
|--------------------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| Farm owner | 46 | 33.6 | 42 | 43 | 4 | 10 |
| Farm tenant | 30 | 21.9 | 17 | 18 | 13 | 33 |
| Farm cropper | 40 | 29.2 | 18 | 19 | 22 | 55 |
| Farm laborer | 6 | 4.4 | 6 | 6 | --- | --- |
| Fisherman | 6 | 4.4 | 6 | 6 | --- | --- |
| Lumberman | 1 | 0.7 | 1 | 1 | --- | --- |
| Others | 8 | 5.8 | 7 | 7 | 1 | 2 |
| TOTAL | 137 | 100.0 | 97 | 100 | 40 | 100 |

reduced the vast timbered areas to a few unmarketable cypress trees, and in doing so, have largely destroyed the habitat of the fur-bearing animals. As shown in Table 8, none of the heads gave trapping as their usual occupation, and only six of the heads were fishermen. The Black River and the other streams in this community were formerly abundant with fish. However, refuse from the large paper mills which are located in the northern portion of the state have polluted the Ouachita, the Black, and the Little rivers, and the lower end of the Red River with poisonous acids. This has done much to destroy the fish in these streams and to wipe out the economic basis of living in this settlement.

Slightly more than one-third of the heads that were interviewed were farm owners, over half were croppers and tenants, while only six were wage hands on farms. The percentage of ownership was five times higher for the white heads than for the Negro heads, being 52 per cent for the former and 10 per cent for the latter (Table 9). Nevertheless, the percentage of ownership in this

TABLE 9. OWNERSHIP STATUS OF HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD, BY RACE

| STATUS | TOTAL | | WHITE | | NEGRO | |
|---------------------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| Owner | 54 | 39.4 | 50 | 52 | 4 | 10 |
| Squatter | 3 | 2.2 | 3 | 3 | --- | --- |
| Cash renter | 14 | 10.2 | 11 | 11 | 3 | 7 |
| Share renter | 24 | 17.5 | 14 | 14 | 10 | 25 |
| Cropper | 38 | 27.8 | 15 | 16 | 23 | 58 |
| Not available | 4 | 2.9 | 4 | 4 | --- | --- |
| TOTAL | 137 | 100.0 | 97 | 100 | 40 | 100 |

area, among both whites and Negroes, was much higher than in any other area of Concordia Parish. In 1935 only 14.5 per cent of the total "farms"³¹ in Con-

³¹Using the Census terminology with its extremely fallacious concepts.

cordia were operated by owners, 1.7 per cent of the Negro operators being owners as compared with 12.8 per cent for the whites.³² This situation on Black River is rather typical of the conditions in areas adjacent to plantation sections generally.

TYPES OF FAMILIES

For purpose of analysis, the families were divided into two types, namely, the "normal family" and the "broken family." The normal family includes three varieties: (1) husband-wife-children-only; (2) husband-wife-children-others; and (3) husband-wife-only. The varieties included in the "broken family" are (1) husband-children-only; (2) wife-children-only; (3) husband-children-others; (4) wife-children-others; (5) other combinations.

Using this classification (Table 10) it was found that the husband-wife-

TABLE 10. TYPES OF FAMILIES, BY RACE

| TYPE OF FAMILY | TOTAL | | WHITE | | NEGRO | |
|----------------------------------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| Single person household..... | 3 | 2.1 | 3 | 3 | — | — |
| Husband-wife-others | 5 | 3.7 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| Husband-wife-only | 16 | 11.7 | 9 | 10 | 7 | 18 |
| Husband-wife-children-only..... | 81 | 59.1 | 62 | 64 | 19 | 48 |
| Husband-wife-children-others.... | 13 | 9.5 | 8 | 8 | 5 | 12 |
| Husband-children-only | 3 | 2.1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Husband-children-others | 3 | 2.1 | 3 | 3 | — | — |
| Wife-children-only | 7 | 5.2 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 5 |
| Wife-children-others | 2 | 1.5 | — | — | 2 | 5 |
| Other combinations | 4 | 2.9 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 |
| TOTAL..... | 137 | 100.0 | 97 | 100 | 40 | 100 |

children-only was the most prevalent type of "normal" family in this settlement. Approximately 64 per cent of the white households and 48 per cent of the Negro households were of this type. The husband-wife-only was the second most prevalent combination, while the husband-wife-children-others composed the third most prevalent type.

Broken families make up a very large percentage of both the white and Negro families, being 13 for the former and 18 for the latter. Evidently about 14 per cent of the families have been broken by death, divorce, desertion, institutional confinement, or separation. With such a preponderance of young children in this section, the large number of broken families is of considerable importance. The child is so plastic that the home and community can mold his character at will. Very often the broken home contributes a large share of individuals who are socially undesirable or delinquent. More encouraging, however, is the fact that approximately 69 per cent of the normal families have children as compared with approximately 14 per cent of the broken families.

³²U. S. Census of Agriculture, 1935.

TABLE 11. EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF THE MALE HEADS AND FEMALE HEADS OR WIVES OF HOUSEHOLDS, BY RACE

| EDUCATIONAL STATUS* | MALE HEADS | | | | FEMALE HEADS OR WIVES | | | |
|------------------------------|------------|----------|--------|----------|-----------------------|----------|--------|----------|
| | WHITE | | NEGRO | | WHITE | | NEGRO | |
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| No formal schooling..... | 5 | 5 | 10 | 25 | 5 | 5 | 13 | 32 |
| Attended grammar school..... | 23 | 24 | 20 | 50 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 38 |
| Finished grammar school..... | 44 | 45 | 2 | 5 | 38 | 39 | 6 | 15 |
| Attended high school..... | 15 | 16 | 1 | 2 | 17 | 18 | 0 | 0 |
| Finished high school..... | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Attended college..... | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| Finished college..... | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Not available..... | 5 | 5 | 7 | 18 | 12 | 13 | 6 | 15 |
| TOTAL..... | 97 | 100 | 40 | 100 | 97 | 100 | 40 | 100 |

*These categories are mutually exclusive. For example, "attended grammar school" means attended grammar school but did not finish. "Finished grammar school" means that elementary school was completed, but high school was not attended, etc.

EDUCATIONAL STATUS

The educational qualifications of the people of this settlement is a very important consideration. Probably many of the socially undesirable conditions and trends now prevailing in the life of the Black River settlement are traceable, at least in part, to past educational deficiencies. The educational status of the members of this group not only reflects to a large extent the social standards which exist, but also explains, in part, the present situation and serves as an index of what may be expected of these people in the future.

Only 5 per cent of the white male heads and 4 per cent of the white female heads or wives finished high school (Table 11). The male and female heads of the white families, to a very great extent, are lacking in any formal educational training above that offered in grammar school. It is of interest to note, however, that six of the white female heads or wives attended college, while none of the white male heads that were interviewed had ever attended college. In most cases "not available" (Table 11) means that the head received no formal education. If this is coupled with the category "no formal education," the two categories will show, to a limited extent, the low educational status of the people in this area.

Slightly more than 5 per cent of the white male and female heads or wives were without any formal education, and approximately 5 per cent of the male heads and 13 per cent of the female heads or wives were unable to give any information regarding their educational attainments. Over 10 per cent of the white male heads and 18 per cent of the white female heads or wives have either had no formal schooling or were unable to give acceptable information regarding their educational training.

The educational status of the Negroes was much below that of the whites; 25 per cent of the Negro male heads and 32 per cent of the Negro female heads or wives were entirely lacking in formal education. Fifty per cent of the Negro male heads and 38 per cent of the Negro female heads or wives had attended grammar school, and only one Negro male had attended high school. Low educational status is known to make much more difficult the remedying of serious social maladjustments.

SUMMARY

The Black River settlement is inhabited by white people although in the upper reaches which border the large cotton plantations there are many aged Negro residents.

The early settlers were migrants from the eastern seaboard states; later, they were followed by an infiltration from Catahoula, Rapides, and Avoyelles parishes. These neighboring parishes still furnish the larger portion of the inhabitants who choose Black River as their home. The Negroes began their entry into this area soon after the Civil War. Apparently, Black River is a place of refuge—especially for the unsuccessful farmer and the aged plantation Negro cropper and tenant.

However, a large proportion of the present inhabitants are sons and daughters of parents who have lived their entire lives within the bounds of this iso-

lated settlement. A large percentage of the present inhabitants still bear family names which appeared on the early public records of this section of the parish.

The age distribution of the white inhabitants is radically different from that found in a typical rural area and is characterized by a scarcity of persons aged 65 and over, large proportions of the inhabitants in the ages 15 to 44, inclusive, and a disproportionately large share of children. The Negro age and sex distribution is similar to the typical rural distribution.

The settlement has a very high birth rate, especially among the white inhabitants, the fertility ratio in this isolated district being more than twice that necessary to maintain a stationary population. There is a very high proportion of rural youth in this section. In more favorable times many of these would probably have left the community for towns and cities. Their presence places a tremendous burden upon the educational facilities of Black River.

From the standpoint of welfare, there apparently is a great need for maternal and child welfare services among the whites. Since the larger portion of the white population are in their most productive years, they would have the most to gain from, and would also contribute most to, the success of a resettlement or rehabilitation program.

There is a marked scarcity of Negroes aged 25-45, inclusive. This indicates that either a strong tide of migration has carried them away, probably to the neighboring cotton plantations and sawmills that are located in this and the neighboring parishes, or that the community is a haven of refuge for older persons of the colored race.

This settlement is characterized by a very high percentage of married persons among both the whites and Negroes. The absence of divorces and separations among these Negro households seems to indicate that probably in this remote area the Negro marital and family mores are more than ordinarily similar to those of their white neighbors.

A large percentage of both the white and Negro homes have been broken by death, divorce, desertion, institutional confinement, or separation. Very often the broken home contributes a large share of the individuals who are socially undesirable or delinquent in a given community.

Agriculture is the primary means of livelihood, although in former years the forests and streams furnished an abundance of game and fish. At present 9 out of every 10 of the male heads depend upon their small farms for their livelihood. The percentage of farm ownership, among both white and Negroes in this area, is much higher than that in the parish as a whole.

The male heads and female heads or wives of the white families, to a striking extent, are lacking in any formal educational training above that offered in grammar school. The percentage of Negroes without any formal education was slightly more than five times higher than that of the whites. Unquestionably the relatively low educational status of its members accounts for many of the socially undesirable conditions which now prevail in the life of this community.

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESOURCES OF THE BLACK RIVER SETTLEMENT

In the foregoing section an attempt was made to inventory the human resources of Black River. It is now fitting to analyze the material resources of the families in this area. The socio-economic composition is valuable not only for indicating the status quo but also in indicating the potentialities of rural people to acquire a higher standard of living.

SIZE OF THE FARM

The size of the farming unit is of particular importance in sizing up the economic status of the agriculturists, because it serves to account for the larger proportion of the total income received by the family. The small family farm is the prevailing agricultural unit in this area. Two-thirds of the farms contained less than 26 acres, and only nine of the farms contained over 75 acres (Table 12).

TABLE 12. SIZE OF HOLDINGS, BY RACE

| SIZE OF HOLDINGS (acres) | TOTAL | | WHITE | | NEGRO | |
|-----------------------------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| None | 1 | 0.7 | — | — | 1 | 2 |
| 1 - 5 | 5 | 3.6 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| 6 - 10 | 20 | 14.6 | 13 | 13 | 7 | 18 |
| 11 - 25 | 49 | 35.8 | 29 | 30 | 20 | 51 |
| 26 - 50 | 22 | 16.1 | 18 | 19 | 4 | 10 |
| 51 - 75 | 6 | 4.4 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 2 |
| 76 - 100 | 2 | 1.5 | 2 | 2 | — | — |
| 101 - over | 7 | 5.1 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 5 |
| Not available | 25 | 18.2 | 21 | 22 | 4 | 10 |
| Average size | 23.1 | | 24 | | 20 | |
| TOTAL | 137 | 100.0 | 97 | 100 | 40 | 100 |

The average farm was 23 acres in extent. Seven out of 10 of the Negro families were living on holdings of less than 26 acres. Such a situation—minute family farms in an area where the crop is lost almost annually because of the backwaters from the Mississippi and Red rivers—represents one of the fundamental maladjustments in this settlement. In spite of the fact that the soils in this area are a part of the rich alluvial valley of the Mississippi River and have a very high productivity, such a state of affairs prevents any high return from agriculture. When the cotton crop is not destroyed by the high water, the usual yield is from one to one and one-half bales per acre. With proper protection from floods and adequate drainage, a 25-acre farm well cultivated would provide an adequate income. However, the possibility of protecting this area by a system of levees is very remote.

SIZE OF THE GARDEN

The farm land is exclusively devoted to the cash crop—cotton. Corn is raised mostly to feed the work stock, but many of the families have it ground into meal for home consumption. The gardens, although very small, are of first importance because they furnish a large portion of the food which is consumed. Peas, beans, potatoes, tomatoes, and mustard greens are commonly raised. More than 92 per cent of the families made a small garden (Table 13). This is a rather unusually

TABLE 13. SIZE OF HOME GARDEN, BY RACE

| SIZE | TOTAL | | WHITE | | NEGRO | |
|-------------------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| None | 8 | 5.8 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 5 |
| 0 - ½ acre | 127 | 92.7 | 89 | 92 | 39 | 95 |
| ½ - 1 acre | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Over 1 acre | 2 | 1.5 | 2 | 2 | --- | --- |
| TOTAL | 137 | 100.0 | 97 | 100 | 40 | 100 |

high percentage. Furthermore, it applies with equal force to the Negroes, which is seldom the case. In a recent study³³ of Negro farm laborers on the large cotton plantations in this parish, it was found that a large percentage (62.5) of them did not attempt to raise a garden even though the space was furnished free. People who make strenuous efforts at self-support in the face of overwhelming natural difficulties should be the first assisted to obtain better opportunities.

SIZE OF THE HOUSE

The number of rooms in the house represents a vital part of the living standards of any people. The commodiousness of the homes reflects to a large extent the living standards of the settlement as well as that of the individual families.

The housing conditions in this settlement fail in every respect to meet the barest standard of comfort and health. One-third of the families in this community live in one- and two-room houses (Table 14). An examination of Table 15 reveals that the average size of the families is approximately 4.6 while the average number of rooms in the house is approximately three. Only in two instances was there an average of one or more rooms for each member of the household. Approximately two-thirds of the families are living in houses of less than four rooms.

HOME CONVENIENCES AND EQUIPMENT

Most of the homes in the Black River settlement are lacking the chief necessary conveniences and equipment. Externally and internally they reflect a struggle for mere existence. Poorly-kept homesteads, built of undressed lumber,

³³Grigsby, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

TABLE 14. SIZE OF HOUSE, BY RACE

| NUMBER OF ROOMS | TOTAL | | WHITE | | NEGRO | |
|----------------------------------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| One | 9 | 6.6 | 8 | 8 | 1 | 3 |
| Two | 43 | 31.4 | 27 | 28 | 16 | 40 |
| Three | 34 | 24.8 | 21 | 22 | 13 | 32 |
| Four | 38 | 27.7 | 29 | 30 | 9 | 22 |
| Five | 7 | 5.1 | 6 | 6 | 1 | 3 |
| Six | 6 | 4.4 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 137 | 100.0 | 97 | 100 | 40 | 100 |
| Average number of rooms | 3.06 | | 3.14 | | 2.82 | |

unpainted in most instances, roofed with hand-hewed shingles or "shakes," lacking windows other than small squares in the sides of the walls, which are hinged with wooden doors, and heated by fireplaces with chimneys built of mud and straw, house the larger portion of the inhabitants of this section. The yards around the houses are conspicuously bare of grass and flowers owing to the fact that a few chickens are kept therein.

The interiors of the houses are also not very enticing. The smallness of the houses and the largeness of the families make it necessary that all of the available space in the home be utilized to the fullest extent. Of the rooms in the house, the kitchen and the living room are the most important.

The large fireplace in the living room usually furnishes heat in the winter for both the living room and kitchen. Over the glowing coals on the hearth many of the meals are cooked. In the kitchen are usually found a small wood stove, a table, and a cupboard or shelves that contain the few cooking utensils. These usually consist of an iron kettle, a frying pan, several knives and forks of tin, a china bowl or so, a few drinking glasses, several tin cups, three or four empty lard buckets, and a mixed assortment of tin and china plates. The average living room contains, besides the fireplace, a bed with a tick which was made by sewing several sugar sacks together and stuffing it with straw or moss, a dresser, a small kerosene lamp, a few chairs with cowhide bottoms, a sewing machine, and sometimes an old phonograph. Rarely one finds a few old newspapers or magazines in the home. The walls of the houses are mostly uncovered or else papered with comic papers and magazine covers. Sometimes a picture is found in the living room.

The bedroom is similar to the living room, except that the fireplace and dresser are usually missing. Sometimes homemade bunks replace the beds.

On the back porch, which also serves as washroom, is to be found a shelf or stand on which are a large bucket, a tin or gourd dipper, and a wash pan. A nail driven into the wall serves as a hanger for the hand towels, which are usually made from old sugar sacks.

TABLE 15. AVERAGE NUMBER OF ROOMS PER INDIVIDUAL WITH THE NUMBER OF ROOMS IN THE HOUSE AND THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF MEMBERS IN THE HOUSEHOLD ACCORDING TO THE SIZE OF THE HOUSE, BY RACE

| NUMBER OF ROOMS | NUMBER OF FAMILIES | | PER CENT OF FAMILIES | | AVERAGE NUMBER OF MEMBERS IN HOUSEHOLD | | AVERAGE NUMBER OF ROOMS PER INDIVIDUAL | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-------|-------------------------|-------|---|-------|---|-------|
| | White | Negro | White | Negro | White | Negro | White | Negro |
| One | 8 | 1 | 8.2 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 3.0 | 0.4 | 0.3 |
| Two | 27 | 16 | 27.8 | 40.0 | 4.6 | 4.2 | 0.5 | 0.6 |
| Three | 20 | 14 | 21.7 | 32.5 | 5.1 | 3.5 | 0.6 | 0.9 |
| Four | 28 | 10 | 28.5 | 25.0 | 4.5 | 6.2 | 0.9 | 0.6 |
| Five | 6 | 1 | 6.2 | 2.5 | 6.5 | 5.0 | 0.8 | 1.0 |
| Six | 6 | 0 | 6.2 | 0.0 | 5.7 | 0.0 | 1.1 | 0.0 |
| Average size of family..... | 4.6 | | | | | | | |
| Average size of house..... | 3.0 | | | | | | | |

SOURCE OF DRINKING WATER

The purity of the water supply is of no small importance. Water from shallow wells, rivers, and old cisterns is frequently the source of diseases. The inhabitants of this community secure their drinking water from three sources, namely, shallow wells, rain water which is collected in old cisterns, and the Black River. Approximately 60 per cent of the homes secured their water from shallow wells, 27 per cent used rain water caught in cisterns, and 13 per cent used water from the river. Racial differences in this respect were pronounced. Slightly more than 70 per cent of the white households secured their water from shallow wells as compared with only 30 per cent of the Negro households. Only 3 per cent of the white households used river water as compared with 38 per cent of the Negro households. Old rusty cisterns which are lacking filters, shallow wood-walled wells that are pervious to the flow of seepage impurities, and the muddy water of the Black River all indicate the unsatisfactory nature of the settlement's water supply.

LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY

Were it not for the annual floods and high water, the raising of livestock and poultry might be of great importance in this settlement. As it is, 45 per cent of the white families and 58 per cent of the Negro families did not own a milk cow. Even though farming is practically impossible in this area without work stock, approximately 40 per cent of the families did not own a horse or mule.³⁴ Hogs run almost wild in the woods and swamps of this section, and over three-fourths of the white families and one-half of the Negroes owned some of them. Poultry likewise require little attention, and approximately four-fifths of the families owned poultry. The larger portion of the families owning poultry had more than 10 head.

Beef cattle, unlike hogs, must be fed during the winter months, and they also must be dipped frequently. Aside from this, they easily drown during floods and high water, and when allowed to range in the swamps, many die from disease. Approximately two-thirds of the families did not own any beef cattle. Of the one-third of the families owning beef cattle, the larger portion had less than 10 head.

While the foregoing paragraph is concerned only with hogs, cows, horses, mules, and chickens, an unwritten story of the hardship and suffering that are endured each year by these sturdy individuals in their battle with the spreading backwaters of the Mississippi, Red, and Black rivers, which drive them from their homes, consume their livestock and destroy their crops, is clearly revealed.³⁵

INCOME

Although the economic factor is not an "open sesame" to all social ills, community life is in no small way affected by the size of the income of the inhab-

³⁴Several of the families interviewed are living on part of their parents' farms. Often they borrow a mule or horse from their parents to cultivate their few acres.

³⁵Some of the inhabitants have built large mounds near their homes on which to keep livestock during the high water. The water, however, often rises higher than the mounds. Many of the livestock that survive the high water are usually lost because the owners are not financially able to have them inoculated against disease.

TABLE 16. ANNUAL CASH INCOME, 1928, BY RACE

| INCOME (Dollars) | TOTAL | | WHITE | | NEGRO | |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| Less than 249 | 17 | 12.4 | 5 | 5 | 12 | 30 |
| 250 - 549 | 45 | 32.8 | 38 | 39 | 7 | 18 |
| 550 - 849 | 16 | 11.7 | 14 | 15 | 2 | 5 |
| 850 - 1,149 | 4 | 2.9 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 1,150 - 1,449 | 2 | 1.5 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 1,450 - 1,749 | 2 | 1.5 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 1,750 and over | 2 | 1.5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Not available | 49 | 35.7 | 31 | 32 | 18 | 45 |
| TOTAL | 137 | 100.0 | 97 | 100 | 40 | 100 |
| Average annual cash income | \$328.46 | | \$371.13 | | \$210.00 | |

itants. Where there is a fair income, a desirable standard of living can be maintained even though the size of the individual property holdings is small.

It is almost impossible in such a study to get exact and true income records. The larger share of the income in rural farm communities is derived from the sale of farm products. Since very few families keep books, and since some families cannot or will not give the information desired, the analysis of the income is thus limited. However, allowing for these shortcomings, the following report reveals the meagerness of the income obtained by these families.

Each family was asked to give an estimate of its annual cash income in 1928, but only 64.2 per cent provided the desired information. The larger por-

TABLE 17. TOTAL CASH INCOME IN 1935, BY RACE

| INCOME (DOLLARS) | TOTAL | | WHITE | | NEGRO | |
|---------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| 5 - 154 | 24 | 17.5 | 11 | 11 | 13 | 33 |
| 155 - 304 | 72 | 52.6 | 48 | 50 | 24 | 61 |
| 305 - 454 | 27 | 19.8 | 26 | 27 | 1 | 2 |
| 455 - 604 | 7 | 5.2 | 6 | 6 | 1 | 2 |
| 605 - 754 | 2 | 1.4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 755 - 904 | 1 | 0.7 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 905 - 1,054 | 1 | 0.7 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 1,055 - 1,204 | 1 | 0.7 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 1,205 - 1,354 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1,355 - 1,504 | 1 | 0.7 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 1,505 - 1,654 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1,655 and over | 1 | 0.7 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| TOTAL | 137 | 100.0 | 97 | 100 | 40 | 100 |
| Average cash income | \$284.30 | | \$312.38 | | \$216.25 | |

tion, 45.2 per cent (Table 16) of these, reported an annual cash income of less than \$549 in 1928. Fourteen and six-tenths per cent had an annual cash income between \$550 and \$1,149, and only 4.5 per cent reported an annual cash income in excess of \$1,150. The smallest annual cash income reported was \$100 and the largest reported, which was by a Negro family, was \$2,600. The average cash income for these families was approximately \$328.46. The average cash income for the white families was \$160.87 higher than for the Negro families, being \$371.13 for the former and \$210 for the latter.

The average total cash income in 1935 was somewhat lower than in 1928, averaging approximately \$44.16 smaller for the entire group. While the average income for the white families was approximately \$58.75 lower, that for the Negroes was higher in 1935 than in 1928. Approximately 60 per cent of the whites and 93 per cent of the Negroes had a total cash income of less than \$305 in 1935, while only four families received an income of over \$1,000. An exceptional Negro family received an income of approximately \$1,820 in 1935.

CASH EXPENDITURES IN 1935

Most of these families live within their meager incomes. As indicated above, 70 per cent of the families had an income of less than \$305 in 1935. Table 18 further indicates that approximately 70 per cent of the families spent \$305 or less in 1935. The average cash income in 1935 per family was approximately \$284.00 (Table 17), while the average cash expenditure per family was approximately \$275.00 (Table 18). Both the white and Negro families spent slightly less than their total income. The average white families showed a cash balance of approx-

TABLE 18. CASH EXPENDITURES IN 1935, BY RACE

| EXPENDITURES (DOLLARS) | TOTAL | | WHITE | | NEGRO | |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| 5 - 154 | 37 | 27.1 | 17 | 17 | 20 | 51 |
| 155 - 304 | 60 | 43.8 | 43 | 44 | 17 | 43 |
| 305 - 454 | 27 | 19.8 | 26 | 27 | 1 | 2 |
| 455 - 604 | 6 | 4.4 | 6 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| 605 - 754 | 1 | 0.7 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 755 - 904 | 1 | 0.7 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 905 - 1,054 | 1 | 0.7 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 1,055 - 1,204 | 1 | 0.7 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 1,205 - 1,354 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1,355 - 1,504 | 1 | 0.7 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 1,505 - 1,654 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1,655 and over | 1 | 0.7 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Not available | 1 | 0.7 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| TOTAL | 137 | 100.0 | 97 | 100 | 40 | 100 |
| Average cash expenditures | \$275.04 | | \$304.38 | | \$204.00 | |

TABLE 19. RELIEF HISTORY OF HOUSEHOLD, BY RACE
(First Year Known to Relief Agency)

| YEAR | TOTAL | | WHITE | | NEGRO | |
|-------------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| Never | 12 | 8.8 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 18 |
| 1935 | 10 | 7.3 | 9 | 9 | 1 | 2 |
| 1934 | 8 | 5.8 | 7 | 7 | 1 | 2 |
| 1933 | 17 | 12.4 | 17 | 18 | 0 | 0 |
| 1932 | 90 | 65.7 | 59 | 61 | 31 | 78 |
| 1931 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 137 | 100.0 | 97 | 100 | 40 | 100 |

imately \$8.06, and the average Negro families showed a cash balance of approximately \$12.25. It is very doubtful, however, that either the white or the Negro families are ever much ahead. The presence of several extremely high income families materially affects the average, but in spite of this the meager income and expenditures of the majority of these families are clearly shown.

RELIEF

The cash income includes, besides the earnings received from agriculture, earnings from part-time employment and the assistance received from "direct relief" and "work relief" as well. The assistance from "relief" has been of no small importance in this area. Ninety-five per cent of the white families and 82 per cent of the Negro families were either on the "relief rolls" at the time of the interview or showed a relief history (Table 19). The larger portion, 61 per cent of the white families and 78 per cent of the Negro families, were first known to the relief agency in 1932.

More than one-half (55 per cent) of the white families and 17 per cent of the Negro families received some form of relief continuously throughout the four years prior to this survey.³⁰ More than four-fifths of the white families and ap-

TABLE 20. NUMBER OF YEARS IN WHICH HOUSEHOLD RECEIVED RELIEF, BY RACE

| NUMBER OF YEARS | TOTAL | | WHITE | | NEGRO | |
|--------------------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| None | 16 | 11.7 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 21 |
| One | 13 | 9.5 | 11 | 11 | 2 | 5 |
| Two | 31 | 22.6 | 15 | 16 | 16 | 40 |
| Three | 17 | 12.4 | 10 | 10 | 7 | 17 |
| Four | 60 | 43.8 | 53 | 55 | 7 | 17 |
| TOTAL | 137 | 100.0 | 97 | 100 | 40 | 100 |

³⁰This survey was completed in June, 1936.

proximately two-thirds of the Negro families received relief assistance for two or more years prior to the study.

OTHER ASSISTANCE

Besides "direct" and "work" relief, a few of the families have received other forms of public assistance such as Agricultural Adjustment Administration benefit payments, National Youth Administration jobs and scholarships, and Farm Credit Administration loans; some of the young men have gone to C.C.C. camps. The larger proportion, 63.5 per cent, however, did not receive assistance from these agencies (Table 21). It is highly significant that in the entire settlement only three white families and one Negro family received benefit payments for crop reduction. As noted previously, the size of the family farms is very small. While 14 per cent of the white families and 30 per cent of the Negro families received Farm Credit loans, the majority of the families lacked sufficient collateral to enable them to secure loans.

The Department of Public Welfare in Concordia Parish, in selecting boys for the C.C.C. camps, gives preference to the young men in this settlement. However, the boys have seldom been away from home, and the majority of them remain in camps only a few days and then come back to the settlement. Local attachments are so strong that few remain the entire time.

Soon after the Works Progress Administration was established, a road project was started in this community. The project was discontinued because the farmers refused to plant their crops as long as they could work on the W.P.A. job.

Of interest is the fact that, while 95 per cent of these families had at one time or another, prior to this interview, received either direct or work relief, only 46.5 per cent were able to give an estimate of the total amount of relief assistance received. Nearly two-thirds of both the white (64 per cent) and Negro (63 per cent) families were unable to supply even a rough estimate. The larger portion, 30.7 per cent, of those who were able to give an estimate reported less than \$150.

TABLE 21. FORMS OF ASSISTANCE OTHER THAN RELIEF, BY RACE
(From Jan. 1, 1935 to Dec. 31, 1935)

| FORM | TOTAL | | WHITE | | NEGRO | |
|--------------------------------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| None | 87 | 63.5 | 62 | 64 | 25 | 62 |
| Farm Credit Adm. only..... | 25 | 18.3 | 13 | 14 | 12 | 30 |
| Agricultural Adjust. Adm.... | 3 | 2.2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Civil. Conservation Corps.... | 5 | 3.7 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Other | 8 | 5.8 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 5 |
| F. C. A. - A. A. A. | 5 | 3.7 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| F. C. A. - C. C. C. | 2 | 1.4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| F. C. A. - others..... | 1 | 0.7 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Two others in combination..... | 1 | 0.7 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL..... | 137 | 100.0 | 97 | 100 | 40 | 100 |

TABLE 22. TOTAL AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE TO NEAREST \$100, BY RACE

| AMOUNT | TOTAL | | WHITE | | NEGRO | |
|----------------------------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| None or not available..... | 87 | 63.5 | 62 | 64 | 25 | 63 |
| Under \$50 | 12 | 8.8 | 9 | 9 | 3 | 8 |
| \$50 - \$149..... | 30 | 21.9 | 19 | 20 | 11 | 27 |
| 150 - 249..... | 1 | 0.7 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 250 - 349..... | 3 | 2.2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| 350 - 449..... | 2 | 1.5 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 450 - 549..... | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 550 - 1,049..... | 1 | 0.7 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| \$1,050 and over..... | 1 | 0.7 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL..... | 137 | 100.0 | 97 | 100 | 40 | 100 |

Of the Negroes, 27.5 per cent estimated that they received between \$50 and \$149; one Negro family reported it had received approximately \$250; one white family estimated that it had received over \$1,050 from the relief agency. This meager information does not allow an elaborate analysis. Such information as exists is presented in Table 22.

ESTIMATE OF CASH REQUIREMENTS

Of particular interest is Table 23. Each family head interviewed was asked, "How much cash money per year would you need to make at your usual occupation to be able to get along without relief assistance?" As shown previously, slightly more than 90 per cent of the families were receiving or had received either direct or work relief.

TABLE 23. AMOUNT OF CASH MONEY NEEDED FROM USUAL OCCUPATION TO BE ABLE TO GET ALONG WITHOUT RELIEF ASSISTANCE, BY RACE

| AMOUNT NEEDED | TOTAL | | WHITE | | NEGRO | |
|----------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| Less than \$104.99..... | 1 | 0.7 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 105 - 204.99..... | 35 | 25.8 | 12 | 12 | 23 | 58 |
| 205 - 304.99..... | 55 | 40.1 | 43 | 44 | 12 | 30 |
| 305 - 404.99..... | 17 | 12.4 | 16 | 17 | 1 | 2 |
| 405 - 504.99..... | 16 | 11.7 | 16 | 17 | 0 | 0 |
| 505 - 704.99..... | 7 | 5.1 | 6 | 6 | 1 | 2 |
| 705 - 904.99..... | 2 | 1.4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| \$905 and over..... | 1 | 0.7 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Not available | 3 | 2.1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 |
| TOTAL..... | 137 | 100.0 | 97 | 100 | 40 | 100 |
| Average amount needed..... | \$311.24 | | \$352.16 | | \$212.00 | |

The larger proportion (60 per cent) of the Negroes stated they would be able to exist without relief assistance on an income of \$205, or less, while two-thirds of the white families need an income of \$305. The average amount needed by these families to get along without relief is approximately \$311.24. As shown previously, average cash income per family in 1935 was approximately \$284.30. If the cash income in 1935 is subtracted from the amount needed to get along without relief, there is a difference of approximately \$26.94. That is to say, the average family needs a supplementary income of approximately \$26.94 to make the budget balance. As was to be expected, the white families thought they needed more money than the Negroes. The average amount needed by the white families was \$352.16, while the average Negro family needed only \$212.

The average white family had a cash income in 1935 of approximately \$312.38 (Table 17); however, the average amount needed to be earned at their usual occupation to be able to get along without "relief" was \$352.16, a difference of \$39.78. The average cash income per Negro family was \$216.25, while the amount needed was \$212. The Negro families, therefore, seem to be making enough at their usual occupation so as not to require any assistance from the relief agency. Apparently this is the case, for none of the Negroes interviewed in this community were receiving relief assistance in December, 1935.

SUMMARY

All in all, the foregoing data on the socio-economic resources of this settlement have revealed several serious conditions which must be taken into account before a synthesis of both the human and economic resources is attempted.

In the first place the minute family farms are incapable of producing more than a subsistence livelihood as long as the backwaters of the Mississippi, Red, and Black rivers are allowed to destroy the crops. Second, the living conditions as reflected by the shabbiness of the houses, the smallness of the homes in comparison to the size of the family, lack of screening, and primitive sanitation, cannot be expected to rise above the simplest standards so long as the inhabitants depend upon the land as their primary means of income. And, third, the economic margin is so narrow, as shown by the meagerness of the total cash income and expenditures, that the smallest loss in income, particularly cash income, forces them to seek public assistance. Apparently the families in this area are habitually on, and oftentimes below, the economic margin.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding sections of this study an attempt has been made to assemble the pertinent facts relating to the quality, quantity, and present situation of the population of a selected "troubled" rural settlement in the state of Louisiana. In the settlement chosen for investigation lived 490 families containing 2,119 members. Most of the inhabitants are whites; however, along the fringes of the upper end which borders the large cotton plantation areas, there are many aged Negro inhabitants. A very large portion of the present white inhabitants are descendants of the original settlers who migrated from the eastern seaboard into this area about one hundred years ago. French, Irish, Scotch, English, German, Dutch, and American Indian stocks compose the major elements which have entered into its composition. The poor, hilly parishes of the state have furnished a large share of the recent migrants who have chosen this area as their home.

The sex and age distribution discloses several important characteristics. In the first place, over one-half of the total white population is under the age of 20 years. Second, the fertility ratio indicates that white families in this settlement are producing over twice the number of children needed to maintain a stationary population. Third, the larger portion of the white male and female heads or wives are between the ages of 15 and 35, with approximately 3 per cent of the total white population 65 years and over. Lastly, the Negro age distribution indicates a marked scarcity of aged 25-45, a large proportion of children, and a large proportion of aged.

The proportion of married persons is exceedingly high for a rural community. The Negro marital and family relations are apparently on a high plane, as indicated by the absence of separations and divorces among the Negro families interviewed. Practically every head of a household is a farmer. The lack of diversity of occupational interest within this settlement is typical of most isolated rural communities. The percentage of ownership among both the whites and Negroes is larger than that found in the plantation area of Concordia Parish. A serious situation is represented by the fact that a large percentage of the families have been broken by death, divorce, desertion, institutional confinement, or separation. Within these broken homes are found a large number of the young children of this section. The people, to a striking extent, are lacking in any formal educational training above that offered in grammar school.

The analysis of the socio-economic resources of these people revealed that approximately two-thirds of the family farms contained less than 26 acres. Large portions of the families are living in one-, two-, and three-room houses, drinking water from old rusty cisterns, shallow wells, and from the muddy Black River.

The small crowded houses, built of undressed, unpainted lumber, with small square doors serving as windows, present a picture of degradation and squalor. The most critical problem related to the housing is the absence of sanitary facilities. Even though the annual floods (backwater) kill a large number of their livestock and poultry, each family manages to maintain several hogs,* a few chickens, and sometimes a cow. The average cash income received per family was considerably less than that received by wage hands, croppers, share tenants, and

renters on cotton plantations.³⁷ The low income received by these large families provides only a meager subsistence. A large portion of the net income is in the form of products raised for home consumption. Relief has been an important item, especially as a source of cash income. Over 90 per cent of the families were either on the "relief rolls" at the time of the interview or showed a relief history. Other forms of public assistance have been of little importance. Even though their living standards are oftentimes below a subsistence level and their wants are few, the larger portion of the families are quite content with what they have, and appear willing to remain and try to make "a go of life" in the settlement. Families from the area "resettled" in the northern part of the parish immediately returned; youths desert the C.C.C. camps quickly and return home.

The foregoing information takes on significance in this study only insofar as it enables one to estimate the prospect for rehabilitating the families studied. In its final analysis, the only defense for rural planning of any type is the contribution it may make to advance the cause of human welfare. A rural planning program, if it is to be of maximum social value, must take into consideration the material and human resources, present or potential, of any community.

Before any program of rehabilitation, resettlement, or subsistence farming is attempted in this section, there are several serious realities, revealed by the foregoing analyses, which must be taken into consideration.

Of first importance is the location of the Black River settlement. The federal government has purposely left this area unprotected by levees. Apparently this has been done in order that this area may serve as a reservoir for the flood and backwaters of the Mississippi, the Red, the Black, the Ouachita, and the Tensas rivers, so that other areas, especially New Orleans, will not be inundated. The building of higher and more confining levees, and the straightening out of the bends in the Mississippi River have resulted in "bigger and better" floods in this area. Sometimes this settlement is inundated twice within the same year. No program of rehabilitation will be of any lasting value until this situation is remedied.

The human resources of this community are suited to a rehabilitation program. The industrial and agricultural depression undoubtedly shut off employment opportunities for many of the youth who would have normally migrated to other areas in search of employment. At present, they are living with their parents, some working as tenants and croppers for their fathers. Many have married and will probably remain in the community. The larger portion of the white population, especially the youth, are those who would contribute most to the success of a rural planning program, on the one hand, and also gain most on the other.

Even though the annual inundation usually destroys the crops and livestock, the bulk of the families in this community, up until a few years ago, were able to maintain themselves by fishing, trapping, mossing, and the part-time employment offered by the lumbering industries in this section. Unmindful of the consequences, the lumbering industries have practically denuded this area of its forest, and, in doing so, have practically destroyed the habitat of the fur-bearing

³⁷See T. J. Woofter and others, "Landlord and Tenant on the Cotton Plantation," Division of Social Research, Works Progress Administration, *Monograph V*, Washington (1936), p.83.

animals. In addition, constant trapping has further diminished the animal population. Furthermore, several large paper mills have not been prevented from polluting the streams with poisonous acids, which in turn have destroyed the fish in many of the streams of northern Louisiana. Much could be done to preserve the fur-bearing animals, the timber, and the fish resources which have, until recent years, furnished a large share of the state's wealth and a meager livelihood for those people who have chosen the marsh lands, the swamps, and bayous and streams as their habitat. These people, being deprived of their usual occupation, have turned to farming in hopes of eking out a livelihood. Any program of rehabilitation will have to take into consideration that many of those who are farming are really not farmers, but fishermen and trappers who have been forced into farming as a last resort.

The minute family farms in this community are quite incapable of producing even a mere subsistence livelihood so long as the crops are destroyed annually by the backwaters and floods. In turn, the living conditions, i.e., poor housing, lack of screening, primitive sanitation, and unbalanced diets, which are largely responsible for pellagra and digestive disorders now prevalent in this area, cannot be expected to rise above a primitive standard so long as the inhabitants are dependent upon the current meager incomes received from their farms. Although the majority of the families along the Black River have never known prosperity in any form, the poverty of this settlement has not yet reached that distressful, character-undermining sort that we find in the slum districts of our large American cities.

Certainly such "troubled areas" as this cannot be ignored. While this study is especially concerned with the Black River settlement in Concordia Parish of Louisiana, there are many more rural areas of distress in this and the other states.²⁸

There are several possibilities open to those agencies which are in a position to assist this "troubled area."

First, the Black River settlement could be protected by a system of levees. This would require a levee approximately 70 miles in length extending from the mouth of the Red River on the Mississippi River to Jonesville, where the Black River begins.

Second, that portion of land which is subject to annual inundation could be bought by the federal government and the entire population rehabilitated. A similar procedure was followed by the Tennessee Valley Authority. The proposed Eudora floodway would encompass the entire Black River settlement. Should the Eudora floodway ever become a reality, the federal government would have no other alternative. Since much of this area's trouble derives from a program of flood control that has sacrificed its well-being for the welfare of other areas, there would be much justice in this.

The third suggestion seems to offer the greatest possibilities for success. The Morganza and West Atchafalaya floodway which is now under construction should reduce somewhat the seriousness of the high water in the Black River

²⁸See P. G. Beck and M. C. Foster, *Six Rural Problem Areas: Relief — Resources — Rehabilitation*, Works Progress Administration, Division of Social Research, Washington, D. C., 1935.

settlement. Engineers estimate that the Morganza and West Atchafalaya flood-way will reduce the high-water stage by approximately seven feet. This will help, but it will not completely obliterate the threat and consequences of high water. A seven-foot reduction in the high-water stage will not keep the land and most of the homes above high water. But a reduction in the high-water stage should materially shorten the duration of the inundation, and will in turn give a longer growing season. With a longer growing season the inhabitants should realize a much greater income from their farms. This settlement has, by forces of nature, built within itself a strong feeling of solidarity. Each flood places the members of this settlement in a position where they are dependent upon one another for food, transportation, and medical assistance. When the flood waters recede, co-operation does not cease. Every endeavor in which the members can participate co-operatively finds wholesome support. This "we feeling" or "neighborliness" finds its way into both work and play. Whenever there is new ground to be cleared, a house to be built, or a road to be graded, the neighbors help that member upon whose property the task is being performed. He returns the help when they have tasks to be performed in which he can be of assistance. This co-operative feeling offers an excellent opportunity upon which to base a corrective program which would greatly minimize the aftereffects of the inevitable floods.

The co-operative pattern in the construction of homes is a very important local asset. About a dozen homes in this settlement have been built above the high-water stage, and most of those were constructed after the 1937 flood. The new homes are usually constructed after a flood because the high water affords the most economical means of transporting the saw logs from the swamps to the settlement. While the land is still several feet under water, those who intend to build new homes go into the swamps in small boats and select the trees to be used. The timber is then cut and floated out to the front lands. After the water recedes, the logs are sawed into lumber by a small portable tractor sawmill; the owner of the sawmill takes half of the product as his fee. The lumber, after it has been "sun dried," is used in the construction of the houses. The labor, other than family labor, is supplied by the neighbors in the settlement, who work without pay. The building of a house on Black River is very similar to a "log rolling" of the early pioneer days. The settlement has within its bounds an architect, brick masons, carpenters, cabinet makers, and practically all the "specialists" needed in the construction of a home. Only a small proportion of the material used in the construction is "imported." Such items as nails, screen wire, windows, brick, and cement have to be bought. Mutual aid among neighbors serves as a means of greatly improving housing standards, even in periods of adversity.

While it would be difficult, it would not be impossible to construct the houses so that they would be above the usual high-water stage. This would reduce a large portion of the deaths and diseases which are brought about by exposure during the high water.

As mentioned previously, dotted here and there one finds large mounds which have been built for the livestock during high water. As yet the mounds are too few and too small. This settlement should systematically set about the construction of several large mounds where the livestock could be placed during high water. Large flat-bottomed barges which could be towed by small tugs or

motor boats should also be constructed and kept in readiness. In these both people and livestock could be transported to places of safety during periods of inundation. In the past livestock valued at thousands of dollars have been left to drown because of insufficient water transportation.

The health and sanitation conditions of this settlement are greatly in need of improvement. This is not surprising in view of the fact that the fees charged by doctors to visit an ill person in the lower reaches of this settlement amount to about \$25. For this reason, doctors' visits are few and far between. There are, however, a sufficient number of families residing in this settlement to make it possible to have a doctor visit the settlement regularly.

The Department of Public Welfare, with its traveling dental clinic, and the Public Health Service have rendered aid to this settlement which will have a lasting effect. Too little credit is given to these two agencies which daily render a type of service which is needed in the rural areas of this state. In common with many other rural areas this settlement needs society's modern techniques and facilities for health and sanitation extended to it.

Lastly, those who are in a position to assist can completely ignore this area, thus leaving the local agencies the burden of supporting those families who cannot support themselves. Should this plan be adopted, it should be remembered that the Black River settlement is now furnishing and will continue to furnish more than her share of those who are dependent upon society.